

A FAST-DAY SERMON,

UPON THE DAY

APPOINTED IN THE PROVINCE OF CANADA,

By Proclamation of the Governor General,

FOR

PUBLIC HUMILIATION BEFORE GOD,

ON ACCOUNT OF THE

TROUBLES AND CALAMITIES IN INDIA.

PREACHED TO THE

CATHEDRAL CONGREGATION OF QUEBEC.

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S E R M O N .

Prov. XXX. 15, 16. The horse-leech hath two daughters crying, give, give. There are three things that are never satisfied—yea, four things say not, it is enough : The grave ; and the barren womb ; the earth that is not filled with water ; and the fire that saith not, it is enough.

Among the literary works which we have in use, the productions of different ages and countries, we not unfrequently find some smaller composition of a kindred subject but by a less distinguished hand, united as a sort of appendix, to make one book, with that of the principal author.* It appears to be in a manner not very dissimilar, that the words of Agur and the words of King Lemuel are annexed to the Proverbs of Solomon and form respectively the two last chapters of that book. I do not stay to examine the supposition, which seems not to be well supported nor founded upon any fairly assignable reason, that King Solomon himself is here presented to us, at the end of his book, under the sudden assumption, successively, of these two names. Agur, as it appears from the first verse of the chapter, had two pupils of more special note, Ithiel and Ucal ; and it is supposed that, according to a familiar method of conveying instruction, in the east, the different sayings of the chapter are his answers to so many questions pro-

* E. g. Juvenal and Persius, &c.

pounded to him by these attendants upon his teaching. The orientals dealt largely, and many of them do, at this day, in the language of figure and emblem ; and not only, in certain conjunctures of life, would leave, like the fabled sphinx, an important issue dependent upon the solution of an enigmatical saying, such as that of Sampson, " Out of the eater came forth meat and out of the strong came forth sweetness,"—but in dispensing the set and formal lessons of wisdom, would dress them in parable and present them under a veil of imagery, to penetrate which was an exercise of a well-disciplined sagacity or a test, according to the intimation of our Saviour, of an unprepossessed and uncorrupted mind.* And thus the words of the 78th Psalm, (to which there are corresponding words in the 49th,) " I will open my mouth in a parable : I will utter dark sayings of old," are stated by St. Matthew, to have had their special fulfilment in the person of Christ, who " spake all things to the multitude in parables and without a parable spake not unto them."

These observations may not inappropriately be premised, when we are proceeding to the consideration of an obscure passage which in the endeavor to clear it up, will be found to suggest to our minds, by the blessing of God, reflections adapted in different ways, to the solemn occasion upon which we are this day met.

* Math XIII., 11 et seq.

The pupils of Agur, according to the supposition taken by some eminent divines, have proposed to him some such question as this,—What is the most insatiable thing in nature? He first instances the horse-leech, a blood-sucker which will gorge itself till it drops and is made the emblem, in different languages, * of greedy indulgence and grasping desire. But he then passes to other natural or familiar objects which, being marked by the same quality of craving or property of absorption, supply the same kind of illustration and which he therefore calls the *daughters* of the horse-leech, first naming *two* and then rising at once in his enumeration, to *three* and, by a second step, to *four*. This, again, is in the manner of the ancient writers of the east, and we see examples of it in more than one place of Scripture. As in the sixth chapter of the same book of Proverbs. “These *six* things doth the Lord hate: yea, *seven* are an abomination to him,” † and the *seven* are then enumerated; and in the same chapter which furnishes our text, “There be *three* things which are too wonderful for me, yea *four* which I know not,” with other instances which follow, of the same kind. And so, repeatedly, in the

* Among instances which may be familiarly remembered, is that in Horace, describing the man who to gratify his own vanity to the full, would persist and hold on in persecuting another, by reading his own lengthened production:

“Non missura cutem, nisi plena cruoris *hirudo*.”

And in Plautus (apud Bishop Patrick in loc.) the servant who was about to rob the chests of two old men, is made to say, *Jam ego me vertam in hirudinem*.

† See Bishop Patrick's commentary in loc.

denunciations of the wrath of God, by the mouth of the prophet Amos, upon this or that city, region or people, "For three transgressions of Damascus" (to take that one example) "and for *four*, I will not turn away the punishment thereof." *

The first-mentioned of the daughters of the horse-leech, is the grave—the insatiable grave. O what does not the grave hold which is dear to many hearts among us!—what does it not tell us of its still yawning to receive ourselves, dropping, one after another, till very, very soon we are all gone, have all disappeared within those insatiable jaws?—what does it not sweep in and swallow of generation after generation, through thousands of years,—millions still swelling upon millions of this human family, only to come and go,—multitudes of human souls, in every single moment that passes, escaping from their frame of clay, and bequeathing the mouldering remains to the charge of the narrow "house appointed for all living?"—how does it not often verify the description of the prophet, that *hell*,—in the sense there, of the dark unseen world, with which *the grave* is in league and to certain intents, is one, † —that "*hell* hath enlarged herself and opened her mouth without measure, and their

* Is. li. 18, does not appear to afford an example of the like kind, in fact there is no *change* in the *numerical* statement itself, of the judgments inflicted, but *four* seem, at first sight, to be *specified* when *two* had been numerically announced. The *famine* and the *sword*, however, appear to be the *instruments*, respectively, of *desolation* and *destruction*. See Lowth in loc.

† There are instances in which the words are, in a manner, interchangeably used, and so, in our text, the word which we render *grave*

glory and their multitude and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth shall descend into it!"—All that is good, or seems good in the lords of this lower creation, as well as all as that is bad,—all that is sweet, lovely and engaging,—gay, brilliant and attractive,—all that is great, dazzling, illustrious, terrible, renowned,—all the men who have "made the earth to tremble," who have "shaken kingdoms," who have "made the world a wilderness,"—all are brought to the termination of their career at one point—they all

Await alike the inevitable hour,
The paths of glory lead but to *the grave*, *

and which, in the French Protestant Bibles, is *le sépulcra*, is translated *hades* in the Septuagint, *infernus* in the Latin Vulgate, and *hell* in the Douay Bible. According to learned critics, the original idea, the word being susceptible of different shades of meaning, is rather that of the grave than that of the unseen world of spirits or the receptacle, loosely and indefinitely regarded, of the dead. Quis enim ignorat inferum, sive *Sepulchrum ut exponunt Hebræi*, non posse saturari? R. BAYNUS IN TOM: iii. CRITICORUM SACRORUM.

It is pointed out by Dr. Doddridge, upon Rev. 1, 18, (and he is cited by Parkhurst, Gr. Lexicon, on the word *Hades*) that "our English or rather Saxon word *hell*, in its original signification, (though it is now understood in a more limited sense,) exactly answers to the Greek word *hades* and denotes a *concealed* or *unseen* place;" and he adds that "this sense of the word is still retained in the eastern and especially in the western counties of England where to *hele* over a thing is to *cover* it.

In Grose's Provincial Glossary this word is spelt *heal*, and stated as synonymous with *cover*. It is there, as a Provincialism, put down to the account of Berkshire.

* The train of thought here pursued will suggest to the classical reader, the recollection of a striking passage in the tenth Satire of Juvenal:

Unus Pellæo juveri non sufficit orbis :
Æstuat infelix angusto limite mundi,
Ut Gyaræ clausus scopulis, parvaque Scripho.
Cum tamen à figulis munitam intraverit urbem,
Sarcophago contentus erit. Mors sola fatetur
Quantula sint hominum corpuscula.

A remarkable resemblance to this passage is found the following

that grave which is keeping its deposit till "the trumpet shall sound" and the Son of Man shall come, and "all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and shall come forth"—and "the sea shall give up the dead which are in it, and death and hell shall deliver up the dead that are in them:"—The judgment shall be set and the books shall be opened and all men shall be "judged from the things that are written in the books." O God of mercy, grant that our names may be then found written in the Lamb's book of life!

The stroke of natural death, in some one or other of the various modes in which it falls, awaits us as an hereditary infliction entailed upon us by our "first father who sinned." But what incalculable, what portentous aggravations both of the swift advance and the shocking aspect of death, are found in the deeds of violence by which men trample out the light of life in other men! The Lord said unto Cain,—here are the earliest fruits of the fall,—“What hast thou done?—the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.” Alas! how far and wide, from that day to this, the same cry has rung from earth to heaven and the children of this vast family have soiled the bosom of their common mother, with blood which has come reeking from a brother's veins!—

lines from in the first part of Shakespeare's Henry IV. Act 5, Sc. 4.

— Fare thee well, great heart!

Ill-weaved ambition how much art thou shrunk!

When that this body did contain a spirit,

A kingdom for it was too small a bound;

But now two paces of the vilest earth

Is room enough.

Murder, massacre and war—how large a portion do you make up of the doings of mankind!—how many blood-stained pages are read in the history of the race!—which single page is there of that history, from end to end, which is not so stained?—Weapons of death, engines of destruction, contrivances to wound, kill, burn and blow into the air,—vast armaments by land and by sea,—skill exerted, science taxed in its resources,—training, discipline, instruction bestowed, that all may be ready for the business of carnage and the work of ruin and desolation!—And the best interests of men—such is (thus far, at least) * the constitution of this fallen world—their rights, their liberties, their safety, their peaceful enjoyments, their prosperous condition, their progress in civilization, cannot be preserved to them but by the power of the sword—nor can we fail often to number among our best benefactors those who wield it, at the hazard of their own lives, in our behalf: A remark which applies especially to the army of Britain, in whose ranks also, we have the happiness of numbering many valuable members of society at large and many excellent Christian men. †

* I have introduced this qualification, because I would not be understood to pronounce against the *literal* fulfilment, in happier days to come, when the sway of the Gospel shall predominate in the world, of such passages as Is. 2, 4.

† Among various examples of the power of faith, in the midst of the present troubles of the East, there is one peculiarly touching, in the case of an ensign, scarcely turned of sixteen, who falling, in company with a native Catechist, into the hands of the mutineers, and seeing his companion in a position to save his life by abjuring his religion, charged him with his own dying breath (he was covered with wounds) *not to deny the Lord Jesus*. The catechist escaped by the sudden appearance of a party of the Queen's troops.

The common scenes of death are sad : the horrors of war are sadder : but there are horrors which far surpass the ordinary and necessary horrors of war ; and with the details of many such horrors we have been made but too mournfully familiar by the intelligence, from time to time, received from India. There, in the grandest dependency of the British empire, our own people, our fellow-subjects, our fellow-Christians, have not only been plunged into the midst of tragedies too frightful and revolting to be here pictured, but have been the victims—the victims of all the fierceness of hell, as it were, caught up into the bosom of men and let loose upon the unhappy objects of their hatred. God be praised !—the tide appears to have turned : we have now to mingle thanksgiving with our humiliation and almost to blend, in a manner, festival with fast : yet we may well be checked in any feeling like this, and may fall back in sack-cloth and ashes before our God,—not only in our retrospect of still recent horrors, or our sorrow for the sacrifice, in our successes, of so many valuable lives,—but in the actual and prospective contemplation of all that must be witnessed before the struggle can be over.

We who occupy here another great and distinguished dependency of the empire and repose by the mercy of our God, in the bosom of peace and safety,—we shall not be so ungenerous, so unfeeling, so un-

christian, as to refuse our liveliest sympathy to those who suffer at a distance:—if they are men, that would be enough : but beyond the claim of simple humanity, they are connected with us by close and sacred ties and identified with us in high and precious interests. And our own turn to suffer may come. We may laugh, some of us, at the idea of our being liable to dangers and calamities like those of India—but there are judgments in multiplied forms, reserved in the hand of God, and we have not been without experience, in this Province, of different severe dispensations. And now that awful and mysterious pestilence which at intervals within thirty years or less, has made its circuit round the globe, has re-appeared in Europe from whence it was before imported to the shores of Canada. Why should you frighten people, out of the pulpit, with such an idea ? is the sort of question which is sometimes asked—but, except that “ knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men ” to seek the open refuge of his love, we want to frighten nobody : we want to prevail upon them in the contemplation of the divine dealings and the judgments which are abroad in the earth, so to draw near to God in Christ and to “ cast all their care,” for body and soul, upon Him who “ careth for them,” that they shall be afraid of nothing, nothing whatever ; that they shall be enabled to appropriate the happy language of that faith which

prompts men to "fear no evil, though they WALK IN THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH." And as with respect to the sanitary precautions of municipal authority or of bodies specially constituted to watch over the public safety in seasons of peril from contagion, so certainly with respect to our spiritual health and our prepared condition before our God in this changeful world, it is a wise maxim which says *fore-warned, fore-armed*. The whole aspect of the times, my brethren, is serious, and in many points of view, it is sombre. Commerce is now one of the great moving powers of the world : intimately linked with the condition and the destiny of nations ; and if *that* interest among men, has, in countries "whose merchants are princes, and whose traffickers are the honorable of the earth,"—in Europe and in foreign America, at home and the colonies,—received a marked and it may be said an alarming check,—we ought, with whatever hope that affairs will be permitted, in due course, to right themselves, to consider that it is a check given to pride, to avarice, to worldliness of heart, to a love of extravagant display, to a too adventurous and reckless spirit of speculation, to a too confident reliance upon human resources, to a too ready disposition to put Mammon in the place of God. We ought in the midst of commercial reverses or financial depression, to learn more sober thought, and to look to it more closely, that our "treasure" is indeed "laid up in heaven."

Wherever our *hearts* are, *there* is our *treasure*. If our hearts are not in heaven neither is our hope there assured to us. If our "life" is not "hid with Christ in God," we have "no life in us." These are serious, solemn matters—well to be pondered, thoroughly to be ascertained, with the remembrance that our religion is not an affair of generalities entertained in the faith of the community;—it is a personal affair with each of us and refers to the state of our own individual souls before God.

Pursuing the succession of images presented in our text, I shall no further notice, in its direct literal force, the illustration drawn from the condition of a *childless wife*, than to point out that if the craving and intense desire for offspring, * is found in the category of insatiable things, the choice of such an illustration may be accounted for, by a peculiar feeling existing among Hebrew women—a feeling supposed to have been, in a good measure created by the promise that the Messiah should spring from among that people, and the hope, in individual bosoms, of becoming the ancestress of this mighty Messenger of God. We may, indeed, go back to the case of Rachel, who after being wedded to the patriarch Jacob, importunately cries out, "*Give me children or I die.*" We see how Hannah was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord and wept sore, and vowed a vow to

* The expression has been sometimes taken in another sense—but this appears to be the most natural and judicious interpretation.

dedicate her son to God if her prayer should be heard. We find in the prophetical writings and in the psalms, many allusions to the same kind of sentiment; and in the thanksgiving of Elizabeth the mother of the Baptist, who, up to a great age, had been childless, she blesses God that he had "*taken away her reproach among men,*" as the barrenness of Hannah already noticed, had been the subject of jeers from her adversary. This may be enough to explain what kind of allusion is interwoven with the image here considered. I shall forbear in the same manner, from dwelling upon the illustrations in their *literal* sense which are drawn from the avidity of the earth in drinking in the re-iterated showers which fertilize her bosom—and from the ravages of fire of which the fury still augments while there are materials to feed it: Although I might here not inaptly carry back your thoughts not only to the memorable conflagrations experienced in our cities, but to a more recent calamity of a sad and awful character, in which the elements of fire and water, in a manner conspired for an extensive destruction of human life. And to all such occurrences we may revert with profit, upon an occasion like the present, since they all ought to have a chastening, a softening and a humbling effect upon our hearts. But it is rather to the emblematical lesson conveyed in these pictures of the text, that I would direct your attention. They may be all taken to figure forth the ungoverned and insatiable passions

of man—his grasping avarice, his reckless ambition, which the prophet Habakkuk describes by saying that he “enlargeth his desire as hell and is as death and cannot be satisfied;”—his indomitable lust, his relentless and implacable spirit of revenge, thirsting for blood like the thirsty earth which seems to gape and pant for a supply of water—like the horse-leech which sucks itself full and would suck on till it bursts. O what propensities, what malignant, what horrible, what demonlike propensities lurk, often unsuspected within the heart of man—unsuspected perhaps by himself, as Hazael of old, when the prophet wept at the prospect of his crimes and cruelties, cried out reproachfully, “But what, is thy servant a dog that he should do this great thing?”—The acts of the mutineers in India, are the acts of *men* :—*any* body of men, nursed in a false religion, their nature uncorrected by those Christian influences which operate upon the social character even where the true power of religion upon the individual subject, is sparingly known—their dark suspicions awakened, their cherished prejudices shocked and alarmed by mischievous suggestions,—their savage passions inflamed to madness and set free to work their will upon their victims, catching a contagious fury from man to man, in the rush and amidst the yells of a phrenzied crowd—the rapacity of plunder and the wild triumph of success mixing themselves with those other stimulants of fierceness,—*such* men *anywhere*, so urged, so acted upon, are prepared

for every conceivable enormity—and whatever atrocities they may perpetrate to which we give the names of *inhuman* and *unnatural*,—they cannot, in strict propriety, be so called, for they are *human* doings and the dictates of corrupt and misguiled *nature* :—Matched, in all ages of the world, by a multitude of familiar instances and serving in no manner to invalidate the saying of King Solomon, that “there is no new thing under the sun.”

Well may we bless our God who has given us the Gospel of Grace and Salvation, and earnestly ought we to cultivate our advantages, watchfully to guard them, openly and convincingly to manifest their effect upon our lives and manners. And while the empire is engaged in this awful struggle with so ruthless a foe and the power of the empire is put forth to crush this wicked revolt, let us pray that the glories achieved by our arms may be sullied by no such spirit of unchristian revenge as would resemble though but faintly, the very spirit which we are obliged forcibly to quell. Let us watch, if we find the smallest tendencies of such a nature, against any vindictive feeling of satisfaction in whatever awful chastisement our defenders in the East, may be compelled to inflict : let us pray, *this day* that neither there nor at the seat of Empire, nor here among ourselves, nor anywhere else, our people may exult in the idea of *retaliatory* proceedings, conducted upon the principle of “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” Our

duty is, this day, while we pray for the complete extinction of the revolt and complete re-establishment of British power in India, to confess, at the same time the many delinquencies of our country in the administration of its Indian conquests and its gross, its deplorable deficiency. (—I speak of the country, *as a country* and of its government.—for the church and other religious bodies have not forgotten to do something for the spiritual interests of India),—its gross, its deplorable deficiency in the duty of recommending and upholding the Faith of Jesus Christ, in the land: Recommending and upholding it, not by indiscreet interference, much less by unchristian compulsion as it regards the debasing belief and worship of the natives,—no—but by making our “light shine” in our “good works,” that men may own and “glorify our father which is in heaven,”—and by establishing full and efficient provision for the teaching and ordinances of our own holy faith for our own people upon the spot with all facility given for the extension of that faith, in favorable openings, to the Heathen. The very reverse of this system—it cannot and ought not to be disguised and might be shewn by many and glaring examples,—has been seen in the policy pursued by the British Government not in India alone, but in the entire extent of her dependencies abroad, the prodigious outlying portions of that empire upon which we boast that the sun never sets—and if there can be anything to make us tremble with the apprehension that

the sun of her ancient glory is ordained to set in darkness, it is precisely such a course of policy as this: "Them that honor me I will honor, and those that despise me," says the Almighty—"shall be lightly esteemed." And what is it but to despise him if we ignore our own Religion before any people who have not the faith which we profess and put our "candle under a bushel" lest its light should be offensive to those who prefer living in the dark?

Mourn we, then, for the sufferings—mourn we too, for the errors and the crimes of humanity—mourn we in sympathy with mourners,—there are such among ourselves in this place,—who have lost, in this horrible war, what they loved—but let us not forget to mourn—for *that* is the special call upon us, in a day of solemn humiliation,—for the sins of our country, our community and for our own personal sins. We are assembled to deprecate the divine judgments and we ought to hope that the Lord will "hear the cry" sent up to heaven in these observances, no doubt from many faithful many penitent hearts, and will "have respect unto" us. Many and encouraging are the examples in scripture, of impending judgments averted by the timely and sincere humiliation of the people against whom they had been denounced. And let us in conclusion, turn our attention to that particular feature of penitence and solemn self-abasement before God, which appears in the charge given to the proud king Nebuchadnezzar that he would "break off his

sins by righteousness and his iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor"—or more pointedly still, in the express declaration made by the Almighty of what it is that constitutes the fast which he has chosen ; and the "acceptable day to the Lord : Is not this the fast that I have chosen, to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke ? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house : when thou seest the naked that thou cover him and that thou hide not thy self from thine own flesh ?"—We contributed to the patriotic fund in the Crimean war :—we shall be equally ready, it may be hoped, to help in the objects of the Indian Relief Fund now. And if we could be supposed to demand a precedent for our being thus called upon twice over, to send relief to remote parts of the world, we have precedent in the very beginning of our holy faith, Apostolic precedent, if that will satisfy us, for collections in the case of famine and other calls upon charity, in aid of the poor brethren in distant parts. In our own day, not to speak of what has been done by British hearts and hands, we have seen our neighbors of the American Republic, in different instances, sending shiploads of help to alleviate public calamity in the territories of the British crown ; and we see now, that foreign powers and foreign communities have recognized the claim of our Indian sufferers upon their

bounty. None, none among us, I am persuaded, will be ready to murmur because some charitable appeals may accidentally come close together, or to fling back upon the Church the words of our text and to say that *she* is a *daughter of the horseleech* saying *give, give*. We *do* say, on behalf of the Church and in maintenance of this or that plea which she commissions us to put forth, we *do* say *give give*. But we say it in a happy sense. There are continual calls upon a christian: it is a part of the system in which he moves: let him bless God for the opportunities of good put in his way. O what can we do better, what happier for ourselves, than to *give*, out of the means with which God, not according to our desert but according to his mercy, has blessed us that we may advance his cause or comfort and help his suffering creatures upon earth?—Let us cultivate the maxim, let us cherish the sentiment which we have been taught by Him who *gave* to us what none other could do,—of Him who *gave himself* for our salvation,—that **IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THEN TO RECEIVE.**